

On Top Of The News

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Monday, October 26, 2009



TIERRA DEL SOL -- In connection with Setar NV's Health Month activities, employees of Aruba's largest service provider were given the opportunity to have a Golf Clinic at Tierra del Sol, with golf pro Adam Williamson.

"Tierra del Sol," says Head Golf Pro Oliver Riding, "is very proud to have been

chosen by Setar, and arranged for a very pleasant afternoon, overlooking the island's North coast."

Pictured here, good connectivity, as Setar golfers, connect with golf balls, for a fun practice session.

Designed by renowned Robert Trent Jones II, Tierra del Sol, situated on the scenic northwest

Setar In Full Swing



restaurant and swimming pool
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point of Aruba, is the only 18 hole championship golf course on the island. Tierra del Sol includes a full length practice range, putting greens, chipping areas, a magnificent clubhouse with golf shop,



The Delconte & Durniok families reunite in Aruba



NOORD -Melissa & David Durniok are no strangers to Aruba. They are back on the island but this time they brought their bundle of joy Maggie. Melissa & David met on Match.com and True love took over. They have a lot in common including the love of turtles. They were married in Aruba on June 19th, 2007 at the Divi Phoenix along the seashore together with 53 close family & friends.

They have returned to paradise with Melissa's parents Pat & Jim Delconte to relax and enjoy Maggie's first vacation. Maggie is only 15 months old and adorable, she loves the swimming pool and hates the pristine sand. This is Maggie's first vacation from her hometown of Westwood, Massachusetts.

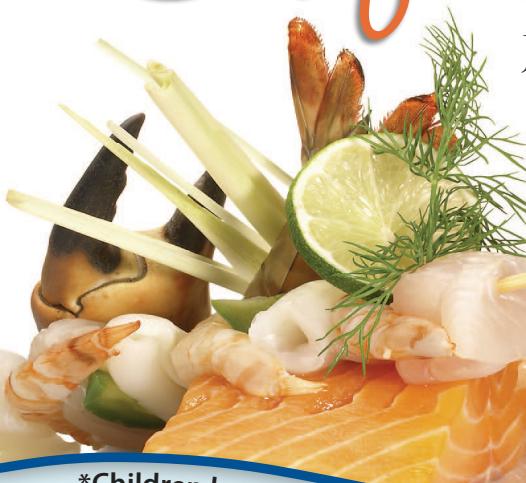
The family had two definite plans on their trip and that was to go back to enjoy two of

their favorite restaurants. Last week the family reserved a table next to the turtle tanks at the Buccaneer Restaurant. Maggie loved every moment watching the splendor of the enormous tanks and all the sea life while enjoying her meal. This was a very special night because this was Maggie's first restaurant outing and she loved it. Melissa & David were happy to see the owners who welcomed them with open arms especially to meet their little Maggie. Melissa & David had another evening out but this time alone at their other favorite restaurant Sunset Bistro at Divi Phoenix where they met Marco the manager and enjoyed a romantic sunset dinner.

The Buccaneer and Sunset Bistro wishes this family love, happiness and a quick return to Aruba. □



October Seafood Fest



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Marriott Aruba Resort & Stellaris Casino honor Hubert Kip



PALM BEACH - Stellaris Casino General Manager Peter Keijzer and executive staff were proud to welcome island media and honored guests to their casino lounge as they paid tribute to Pit Manager Hubert Kip, on the occasion his fiftieth anniversary in the island's casino industry.

Hubert began his career with the Stellaris Casino in 1995, first as a senior supervisor, quickly working his way up to pit boss and finally, pit manager. He first started working in the casinos of Aruba and Curacao in October of 1959, with the opening of the Aruba Caribbean Hotel, the "Grand Dame" of Palm Beach, as a roulette dealer. During Hubert's long and illustrious career in the gaming industry, he has worked at the Hotel Torarica in Suriname, a number of venues in Curacao, and the Flamingo Beach Resort in Bonaire, where he was one of six that took over the casino operation for a

time, as well as keeping the casino at the Aruba Caribbean going during 1979-1980, when both operations were in a state of flux. On Aruba, he has held positions in casinos at the Concord Hotel, Aruba Sheraton, La Cabana Casino, and did a short stint on Isla Margarita before finding a home at the Aruba Marriott Resort and Stellaris Casino. In the fourteen years since, Hubert has earned the respect and friendship of his colleagues and managers. Peter Keijzer was proud to present him on his golden anniversary in the industry with several gifts including an engraved gold watch, a plaque of appreciation and a weekend stay at the Marriott Curacao for him and his wife, Juanita. His colleagues passed the plate and collected a cash gift to insure the couple enjoyed their vacation on Aruba's sister island.

During the celebratory event on Friday evening, Hubert



regaled the gathering with reminiscences of his encounter with Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fischer, when they stopped in Aruba for a day on a Grace Line Cruise. They paid to have the casino at the Caribbean Resort opened for just them so they could play a bit.

Hubert was charged with serving them champagne, and after securing a bottle from the kitchens, found he was unable to uncork it. He blushingly admitted it was one of the more embarrassing moments of his life, but he had many other comfortable encounters with the likes of Harry Belafonte, Roger Moore and Xavier Cugat, who were all frequent visitors to Aruba in the early days of its tourism industry.

Peter Keijzer and management expressed that Hubert richly

deserves the honors bestowed on him, as they believe he is the only active associate in the casino industry after fifty years. Hubert expressed his

gratitude and that even after so many years, "I feel great, I love my work, and I have no plans of retirement any time soon." □



Special Month of October!

Appetizer

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- Onion Soup
- Conch Fritters
- Escargot
- Salad

Entrée

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Appetizer - Entrée - Dessert

5-7 pm

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Ken & Sharon honored at the Tamarind Beach Resort



ORANJESTAD - Recently vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20

consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador



of Goodwill title. The recent honoring were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Ricardo Croes at the Tamarind Beach Resort, they

call their home away from home. Ken & Sharon Deavin were honored as Distinguished Visitors after visiting Aruba for 10 years. □

On picture ATA Rep. Ricardo Croes together with honorees and also staff from Tamarind □



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Wednesday \$10 Buy-in \$1,500 Guaranteed
Thursday \$10 Buy-in \$1,500 Guaranteed
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Monday - Saturday 5:30 - 10 pm



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CMB Bank insures Sinterklaas is coming to Aruba



ORANJESTAD - On Wednesday evening, October 21, island media was alerted to the fact that the worldwide financial crisis was affecting even Sinterklaas, the beloved old man who comes to Aruba every year from Spain to spend his birthday, December 5, distributing toys and treats to good little children, assisted by his stalwart Swart Piet. All were alarmed to hear that Sinterklaas was feeling the pinch and would be unable to afford the trip to Aruba this year.

This was sad news to both youngsters and adults, as the arrival of Sinterklaas at Oranjestad Harbor or one of Aruba's ports is an island tradition that draws thousands of all ages to welcome him with song as his transport touches the shore. Children were in tears, and parents were at a loss, but island media were on the job to insure that this annual event would again come to pass.

It was Javier Wolter, General Directing Manager of Caribbean Mercantile

Bank and his team, with the cooperation of official representatives of the Netherlands, (VNO) who came to the rescue to assure that the funds needed to bring Sinterklaas to Aruba were secured.

Local children's festivities group Party Animals will see to the arrangements for the welcome event and local transport. On Friday morning, the organizing committee consisting of Evelyn Frank of Party Animals and Marinus Wegereef, a fourteen year veteran of arranging Sinterklass' welcome, were joined by Wendy Koopmans of the VNO and several staff members of the CMB Bank in announcing the happy news; Sinterklaas will arrive on Aruba on Sunday, November 22.

Two Swarte Pieten flew in from Spain for the conference to convey Sinterklaas' extreme gratitude to all those that came to the fore upon hearing of his financial distress, and he is very pleased by the actions of the island media when advised of the situation.



He also expressed particular satisfaction in the generosity of Javier Wolter and all the employees of CMB Bank in coming to his assistance. "I feel I can categorize Javier and all his staff as "bon muchanan" (good children)" "Sinterklaas is very much looking forward to his annual visit to Aruba," report the Swarte Pieten. "He reminds all children to be sure to do their best in school, mind their parents, and be nice to all they know, and they can be certain of a nice present and treats on my birthday." □



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Halloween Madness at Moka's Perfect Blend



PASEO HERENCIA — Shoppers and browsers are invited to refresh and recharge at Moka's Perfect Blend Coffee Bar, at Paseo Herencia, on Palm Beach.

While you may start your day with one of Moka's Espresso, Ristretto, Macchiato,

Cappuccino, Cafe Latte or any of Moka's International Coffees, laced with delicious liqueurs, you can also take a midday break with one of Moka's just-squeezed natural juices or protein shakes, and chase it with a home made panini, wraps, tosti or simple sandwich.

Afternoon Happy Hour is most-enjoyable at Moka's



with quality wines by the glass or a choice of special martinis off the bar menu.

In the spirit of the season, the café just dressed up for Halloween, it is scarily decorated and features just-baked monstrous cup cakes, pumpkin squares, red velvet cake, chocolate & cheese cake, death-by-chocolate brownies and fruit tarts.

Moka's is also the perfect place to unwind and relax in the evening, after dinner, over delicious chilled coffee - decaf also available, with ice cream in fun flavors, which you might top off with fragrant liquor, 'cause you only live once!! Moka carries 100% Colombian Coffee Products and is open early till late, take-out, munch-in, with terrace seating. □



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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but Texas de Brazil's version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more. The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, Texas de Brazil will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

Restaurant
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Monday - Sat 6 pm - 11
Sunday 5 pm - 11 pm

For more information or to make reservations, please call 586-4686. □



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PALM BEACH - Fresher than fresh, is the motto of the popular Bugaloe Beach Bar & Grill at De Palm Pier. Caught in the morning, served at night... That's the Bugaloe way!

Jumbled Chef Marc Hernandez is proudly presenting his rich platter with an 18oz Red Snapper or Grouper, a choice depending on the catch of that day. "Bugaloe is known for fun and craziness, so it was just a logical step for me to go crazy with this colorful pallet

of exquisite fish, yellow rice and rich vegetables," Chef Marc says. With a smile he adds "And that just for US\$ 20!"

And right he is, as the platter has been a hit from the start. Served with a bottle of white wine this fish feast is truly a delight on your Monday night.

Bugaloe is located at De Palm Pier in Palm Beach between RIU Palace and Radisson Resort.

OPENING HOURS

Bugaloe Beach Bar and Grill is open daily from 8am till midnight. You may go there for a casual lunch or dinner and on Mondays the special is served from 5:30pm till 10:00pm. Reservations are not needed... just follow the good music, the fun and the smiles on the beach and you will know where Bugaloe is.



SALSA WORKSHOP

Always wanted to learn how to dance Salsa? Well, you will get your chance on Wednesday evening. Reggie and Sabine from ArubaSalsa will show you the moves of Latin

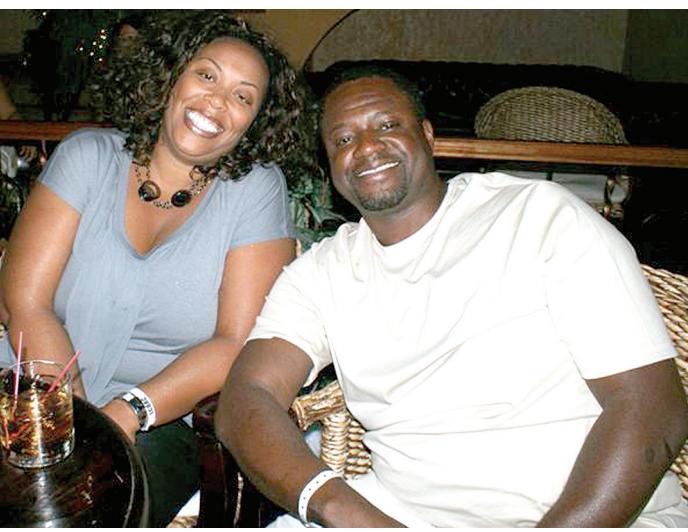
dancing. You will learn how to dance Salsa and Merengue in one hour. The FREE workshop starts at 7:30pm. The popular Salsa live band "PM" will take care of the swinging Latin tunes. Fun guaranteed!

LIVE MUSIC @ BUGALOE

Tuesday 6-9pm: JOYRIDE
Wednesday 7-11pm: PM Band
Friday 6-10pm: PM Band
Friday 10pm - 12am: DJ Jeroen
Sunday 6-9pm: MARISELA & Aquarius



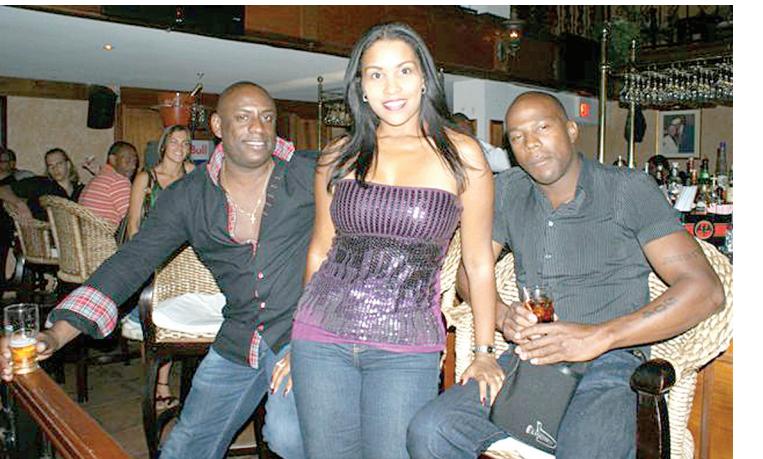
PASEO HERENCIA — Mr Jazz the popular Palm Beach Super Club entertained a



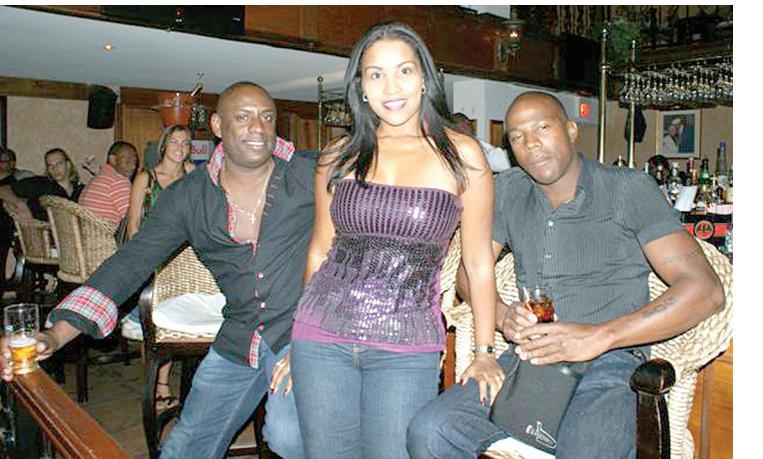
mesmerized club-goers with a rich Electro Lounge sound, mixing Amy Winehouse with



Bob Marley and delivering a Techno-Dance ambiance to an audience made of beautiful



singles and romantic couples, which filled the dance floor all night. Abstract Dawn packs a huge amount of talent, as Lucre the sexy, elegant singer was backed up by Martin Buitenweg on sizzling guitar, Jair Britten & Jose Houtman on flaming percussion, and Aruba's most versatile arranger/composer, band leader



Hildward Croes singing and playing his on-fire keyboard. The band had as much fun as the audience at Mr Jazz and Lucre did not just sing, but really performed all lyrics, making them her own,



interacting with dancers and musicians, and entertaining them with her special charm. Abstract Dawn started this year as an electronic music project featuring the best musical talent combination on the island. The band will return to Mr Jazz for another guest performance on a future Friday, during Dance Night, playing from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. A piece of steamy Havana awaits Jazz aficionados and fine food lovers, at Aruba's first jazz club and steak house, Mr. Jazz, at Paso Herencia. World-renowned Cuban jazz pianist, Chucho Valdes, is the mastermind behind this artistic venture that infuses the hearts and souls of Aruba's guests and locals with live Dixieland,



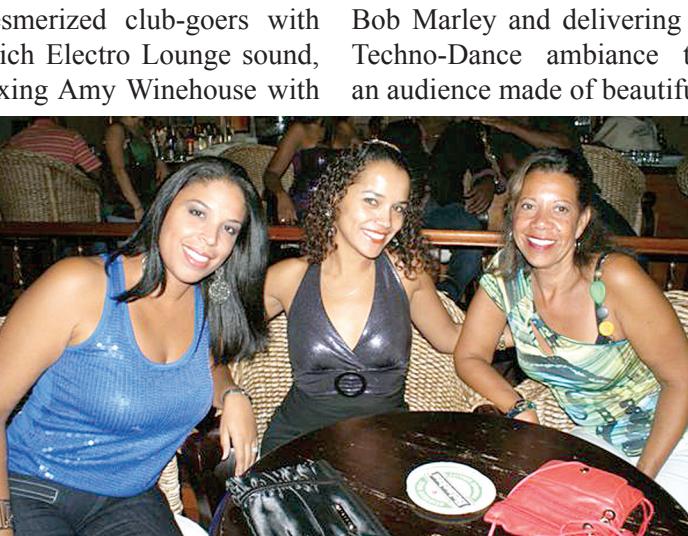
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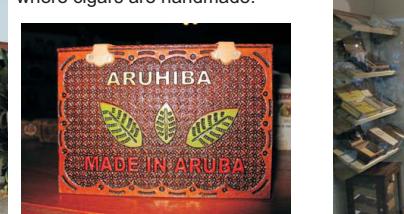
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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba.

Petrocchi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The process took ten years. Petrocchi's dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar box is specially designed for the cigars with the logo "Aruhiba".

Petrocchi considers Aruhiba a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells International cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba Corona with

five cigars and you will get 1 FREE cigar of \$35. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill. Open on Sunday from 9am to 8pm. And also at Tamarijn Hotel open from 9am to 1pm. Aruhiba is only available in above mentioned stores. Visit our authentic tobacco farm where cigars are handmade.



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John & Lisa wed at Town Hall



ORANJESTAD -John Nelson from San Francisco, California & Lisa Puig of Long Island, NY tied the knot in Aruba. The lovebirds met online at true.com during a one week trial. Interestingly,

their profiles were deemed to be incompatible! They first met on April 26, 2007 at John's happy hour where they got to know one another and had many things in common. The first date took place a few

days later at Alberto's Italian Restaurant in Cave Creek, AZ. They found true love instantly.

On Christmas Eve, 2007, John got on one knee in front of Lisa's mother and twin daughters, and John's son and his girlfriend and proposed his love.

They started planning their wedding and decided on a Romantic island in the Caribbean, and found Aruba where they can enjoy an intimate wedding.

They were guests at the Divi Links Resort and enjoyed all the amenities and gorgeous gardens with attentive staff.

The Civil ceremony took place at the Historical Town Hall in Oranjestad on October 5, 2009. The officiate, Betto Christians welcomed them to the sunny island of Aruba and united them as husband and wife. Lisa's friends from junior high school, Carolyn and Artie Traylor witnessed the union of marriage that special day.

Immediately following Town Hall the newlyweds went to the Old Man and the Sea Restaurant in Savaneta to enjoy a romantic seaside dinner. Bella Aruba Photography was there to capture the priceless moments as the couples cheered the celebration with wine, laughter and great memories. The sunset was spectacular as their love to one another. Lissy Lampe of Ceremonies and Celebrations in Aruba created this beautiful day for John & Lisa and wish them "Happily Ever After" □



Photos by Angela Munzenhofer

Chamber threatens to take legal action against GEBE

~ Wants answers about outages, damages ~

PHILIPSBURG--The St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce, through its legal representative, has given utility company GEBE seven days to explain and substantiate why it cannot be held liable for the damages caused by constant power outages.

If this cannot be substantiated to the Chamber's satisfaction, GEBE has also been requested to indicate in what manner and to what amount it intends to compensate its customers for revenues lost as a result of the outages.

Chamber President Glen Carty confirmed Thursday that a letter had been forwarded to GEBE Managing Director William Brooks. Should GEBE fail to respond, the company will face legal proceedings for damages caused "without further warning."

"We want answers, and we want them now," Carty emphasised.

The legal notification points out to GEBE's management that, as the island's only electricity enterprise, it is responsible for all damages suffered by persons or to property as a result of the operation of the electricity enterprise, unless it proves that the damages were caused without any fault on its part or that of its subordinates.

The Chamber's legal representative explained that his client's claim was supported by the fact that GEBE is the holder of a licence granted for the

Island Territory of St. Maarten, pursuant to Article 16 of the Federal Electricity Ordinance, and as such it is responsible for damages.

The Chamber argues that the persons, companies and enterprises in St. Maarten whose interests it represents have suffered massive damages as a result of the numerous power outages in St. Maarten over the past couple of years, which have become even more frequent in the past several months. These damages consist of, but are not limited to, loss of revenue, damage to electrical appliances and expenses incurred for alternatives such as generators.

Furthermore, the Chamber wants GEBE to explain and substantiate in writing what measures the company is taking to prevent further power outages, on what date these measures will be in place, what guarantees are in place that these measures will result in no further, or limited outages, and whether GEBE is willing to provide customers with automatic compensation for damages suffered.

Prior to any legal action being filed, the Chamber indicated that it could request "each and every person and company in St. Maarten to submit an overview of [his/her/its] damages" so that charges could be filed collectively.

Carty specifically mentioned that the Chamber did not doubt the hard work and effort GEBE personnel



were putting in on a daily basis. However, because the Chamber represents the business community and is concerned about St. Maarten's economy, it cannot sit by and endure "the same thing on a different day" any longer.

"We've been reading the press reports about the new engines coming online some time in December. But are we supposed to just sit back and let this situation continue until December? Are we just supposed to accept the loss of revenue?" Carty asked.

"Businesses have salaries and loans to pay – obligations that cannot be compromised. Some companies can't afford a generator or have no place to put one. They are losing revenue daily. So we are asking management of GEBE, the supervisory board and shareholder foundation to take this situation very seriously and act," Carty said.

He added that the Chamber would also be tackling the "ridiculously high price of electricity" by seeking an audience with the Executive Council. □

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BUSINESS**Aruba TODAY****Beating the Street is an easy feat for companies**

FILE - In this Oct. 19, 2009 file photo, trader Paul Maguire works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Topping expectations generally gives share prices a quick lift, but the news can mislead investors about the real state of their business — and just how far this economic recovery has to go.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew, file)

lower net income compared with a year ago.

Still, the recession has, if anything, accelerated the flow of positive earnings "surprises" as companies play it safe and issue more conservative earnings forecasts. Over the past two years, 65 percent of earnings reports have beaten estimates. Even after last fall's financial crisis, the following two quarters produced nearly twice as many beats as misses.

And this quarter, 81 percent of the first 199 companies listed on the Standard & Poor's 500 index that reported earnings came in above expectations.

The expectations game works like this.

Corporation X announces weeks or months ahead of time that it expects to earn, say, 55 to 60 cents per share. Analysts look at various measures of the company's financial and operating performance while compiling forecasts, but rely heavily on guidance from management.

The resulting consensus forecast might be around 57 cents a share.

On earnings day, the company then reports 61 cents per share. It can rightfully say it beat analyst expectations, and shares rise. Other investors

jump on the bandwagon.

The company has some ability to control the number since analysts and most media focus on the so-called adjusted earnings, which can leave out huge one-time charges such as write-offs for restructuring expenses that otherwise could drag down overall results.

The expectations game has been played since the 1990s, when analysts' aggregate predictions became widely available on the Internet.

But the focus on expectations can distract investors from more meaningful numbers. This past summer, earnings stories trumpeted how banks did better than expected. But in stressing the surprise factor, many investors lost sight of the fact that earnings were down considerably for most banks and that troubles still shadow the sector.

In the last 15 years, 61 percent of earnings reports by the nation's largest publicly traded companies — those listed on the S&P 500 — have surpassed Wall Street's consensus estimates. Only 21 percent fell short, while 18 percent matched estimates, according to Thomson Reuters data.

There has never been a single quarter during that period when more companies have missed earnings than beat the Street.

Some companies are more blatant about managing expectations than others.

Apple Inc. is notorious for lowballing its outlooks. The computer maker topped analysts' estimates on Monday for the 27th quarter in a row. It has not come up short on earnings day since the first quarter of 2001. Apple declined to comment on the trend.

Then there's Cisco Systems Inc., which once beat forecasts by exactly 1 cent

per share for 13 straight quarters, from 1998-2001. Coming within a penny so many times during that period merely shows the company was "conservative and transparent in communicating quarterly business conditions to investors," according to spokesman Terry Alberstein.

Stock analysts cannot automatically be blamed for consistently erring on the low side. Until results become public, they must depend in large part on what companies disclose about their performance. A company may deliberately give low guidance so it can top expectations, but that's hard for analysts to counter without evidence.

Brian Marshall, a technology analyst for the brokerage firm Broadpoint AmTech, says Apple's guidance is "almost absurdly low" but there's only so much analysts can do.

"The funny part is, people, including myself, try to see through it," he says.

He inputs hundreds of numbers into his forecast model each quarter, such as gross profit margin, average selling price for various products, the company's past guidance and earnings, and data from other manufacturers and suppliers. Analysts also weigh whether

a company has a history of issuing earnings results that do not include special accounting charges.

Marshall's estimates for Apple's latest quarter were the highest on Wall Street. Yet the company topped his expectations by 16 cents per share and \$200 million in sales. Its stock jumped 5 percent on the news.

Analysts also may have their reasons for wanting to stay on management's good side.

Companies are required to disclose material information to all investors at the same time. But their top executives can

still show up at a firm's annual conference or talk about the industry, notes David Weild, senior adviser at accounting firm Grant Thornton.

"It's pretty widely known that the big-cap companies who are highly sought after can withhold access to get the results they're looking for, and that includes managing down expectations," Weild says.

Carefully managed by companies or not, expectations matter.

A study of stock returns from 1994-2007 concluded that analyst forecasts were the second-most influential force on price movements. Management forecasts topped the list, according to Beverly Walther, an accounting professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management who co-authored a newly released report.

Estimates by analysts carry particular impact when results do not match up. A company's stock price tends to fall much more on a "negative surprise," or miss, than it rises on a positive surprise.

Either way, the momentum from beating or missing an estimate can affect a company's stock price for weeks afterward, Walther said.

But the market impact may be a bit more muted than it was before last year's meltdown. Failing to meet expectations still moves the market, but "it's not as dramatic now," says Matt Lloyd, chief investment strategist for Advisors Asset Management, an investment advisory firm.

"There's a lot of cynicism right now toward estimates — among investors, among everybody," Lloyd says. Because so many economists and analysts failed to see the financial crisis coming, he says, "there's a little more paranoia and distrust." □

Gene therapy cures congenital form of blindness

PARIS (AFP) – Exhilarated scientists on Saturday announced they had used gene therapy to restore eyesight to children blighted by a rare, inherited form of creeping blindness. Youngsters were able to walk unaided around dimly-lit obstacles, take part in lessons at school without extra help -- and one child saw the colour of his father's eyes for the very first time. The revolutionary treatment targets a disease of light-catching retinal cells called Leber's congenital amaurosis, or LCA.

Caused by flaws in any one of around 13 key genes, LCA triggers severe loss of vision and abnormal eye movements in early infancy, usually leading to total blindness in the twenties or thirties.

Doctors led by Jean Bennett of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine tested a way of tackling this tragedy by inserting a corrective gene in a disabled cold virus.

Their study was published online by The Lancet on Saturday, coinciding with a presentation at a conference of American ophthalmologists in San Francisco.

The modified virus was injected into the eyeball, and infected the diseased cells -- in effect, acting like a Trojan horse to deliver the right DNA to the retina.

Twelve patients aged eight to 44 years were recruited in the small, experimental study, and were given the treatment in the eye that had the worst vision.

None of the patients recovered normal sight, but all of them had an at-least 100-fold increase in so-called pupillary light response, meaning the constriction of the pupil when exposed to light.

Six of the 12 recovered sufficient sight that meant they may no longer be classified as legally blind.

The best results were among four children aged eight, nine, 10 and 11.

All four gained vision that enabled them to walk unaided along a dimly-lit simulated street route.

"Another child, who since birth, could only see light

and shadows, stared into his father's face and said he could see the colour of his eyes. Later they played soccer together," the university said in a press release. Normally reserved, the researchers used such words as "dramatic" and "spectacular" to describe the outcome, even though the trial is only a Phase 1 test, the first and most cautious level of a three-phase process to assess prototype

treatments for safety and effectiveness.

It comes less than six weeks after another breakthrough in gene vision therapy, in which two monkeys were cured of colour blindness.

Gene medicine is one of the most alluring areas of biotechnology, offering the theoretical promise of blocking or reversing inherited disease. But this new frontier has also been hit by occasional setbacks,

notably an unexpected or uncontrollable response from the immune system.

The pioneering treatment for LCA, though, has so far had no side effects and its benefits have remained unchanged two years later, say the researchers. "These remarkable results have laid a foundation for applying gene therapy not only to other forms of childhood-onset retinal disease, but also to more common retinal

degenerations," said Bennett. In an analysis also carried by The Lancet, Frans Cremers and Rob Collin of Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre in the Netherlands predicted a major boost for further gene therapy trials. But, they wrote, many genetic disorders remained to be uncovered and at present there was little incentive to unearth the cause of minority disorders. □

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'Paranormal Activity' slays 'Saw' with \$22 million



In this film publicity image released by Paramount Pictures, a scene from the film, 'Paranormal Activity,' is shown.

(AP Photo/Paramount)

By DAVID GERMAIN,

AP Movie Writer

LOSANGELES—"Paranormal Activity" has won a weekend battle of fright films over part six of the "Saw" franchise.

Paramount's upstart chiller "Paranormal Activity" went into nationwide release and took over the No. 1 spot with \$22 million. That compares to just \$14.8 million for the debut of "Saw VI," a franchise that has been an annual Halloween fixture since 2004.

It was the worst opening ever for Lionsgate's "Saw" series, whose previous low was \$18.3 million for the original movie. Subsequent installments of the "Saw" franchise all opened at \$30 million or better.

This time, horror fans simply gravitated toward "Paranormal Activity" instead of "Saw VI."

"Paranormal" ate their lunch," said Paul Dergarabedian, box-office analyst for Hollywood.com. "There's no other way to explain it."

After four weeks in narrower

release, Paramount slotted "Paranormal Activity" into 1,945 theaters. That still was just under two-thirds of the 3,036 theater count for "Saw VI."

"Paranormal Activity" raised its total haul to \$62.5 million. The low-budget movie was shot for a reported \$15,000 but has become a horror sensation because of online fan buzz. The fictional movie unfolds like a homemade documentary as a couple copes with apparitions and supernatural phenomena in their home.

It has a strong shot at topping \$100 million, something none of the "Saw" movies ever managed. While "Saw," the grisly saga of a puppetmaster putting victims through savage moral tests, was embraced as a fresh twist by horror fans five years ago, it now is part of the Hollywood establishment compared to "Paranormal Activity."

"There's no question 'Paranormal' offered a fresh alternative," said Rob Moore,

Paramount vice chairman. "This movie definitely has achieved a place in our culture right now."

The overall box office declined, with Hollywood revenues totaling \$121 million, down 9 percent from the same weekend a year ago, when "High School Musical 3: Senior Year" debuted with \$42 million and "Saw V" opened with \$30.1 million.

The box-office should get a jolt over Halloween as "Paranormal Activity" expands to as many as 2,500 theaters and Sony's "Michael Jackson: This Is It" heads into its first weekend after debuting late Tuesday night.

The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, the Warner Bros. tale "Where the Wild Things Are," fell to No. 3, just behind "Saw VI" with \$14.4 million. Spike Jonze's adaptation of the beloved children's book by Maurice Sendak raised its total to \$54 million.

Among other wide releases, Summit Entertainment's "Astro Boy" opened at No. 6 with \$7 million, Universal's "Cirque du Freak: The

Vampire's Assistant" debuted at No. 8 with \$6.3 million, and Fox Searchlight's "Amelia" premiered at No. 11 with \$4 million.

"Astro Boy" features the voices of Freddie Highmore, Kristen Bell and Nicolas Cage in a sci-fi adventure based on the Japanese comic book and cartoon series about a superhero child robot. "Vampire's Assistant" stars John C. Reilly as a centuries-old bloodsucker who takes on a teenage apprentice in a traveling freak show. "Amelia" is a film biography of pioneering aviator Amelia Earhart (Hilary Swank).

In limited release from IFC Films, Lars von Trier's graphic "Antichrist" had a modest debut, pulling in \$73,500 in six theaters for a \$12,250 average. The movie stars Willem Dafoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg as a couple whose relationship devolves into torture and self-mutilation after the death of their child.

Now that "Paranormal Activity" has a firm grip on audiences, Paramount is toying with the prospects for

sequels or prequels.

"Given the success of this and the passion of the online community, I think our guys have got a number of different ideas they're percolating," Moore said. "Once we've gotten to the end of this run, we'll see what other fun we can have with this."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Hollywood.com. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. "Paranormal Activity," \$22 million.
2. "Saw VI," \$14.8 million.
3. "Where the Wild Things Are," \$14.4 million.
4. "Law Abiding Citizen," \$12.7 million.
5. "Couples Retreat," \$11.1 million.
6. "Astro Boy," \$7 million.
7. "The Stepfather," \$6.5 million.
8. "Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant," \$6.3 million.
9. "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs," \$5.6 million.
10. "Zombieland," \$4.3 million. □

Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber diagnosed with cancer

LONDON — Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, his spokeswoman said Sunday. The 61-year-old Lloyd Webber's condition is in its early stages, a statement from his publicists said. "Andrew is now undergoing treatment and expects to be fully back at work before the end of the year," the statement said.

Lloyd Webber recently announced plans for a sequel to his phenomenally successful musical "Phantom of the Opera." Called "Love Never Dies," it is scheduled to open in London in March and follow on Broadway in November. Rehearsals begin in the new year.

At a media event for the new musical earlier this month, Lloyd Webber said that while the story picks up where "Phantom" left off, he doesn't regard it as a sequel — "it's a standalone piece."

But Lloyd Webber said he was inspired to write the musical

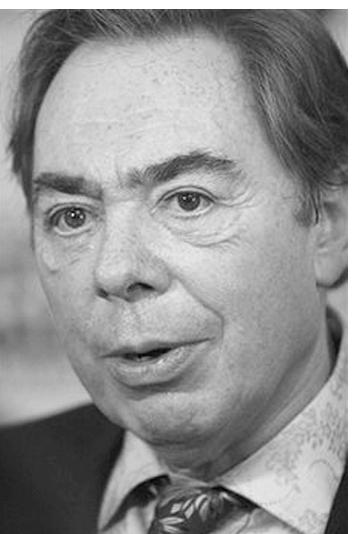
because "there's unfinished business."

In "Love Never Dies," the Phantom leaves Paris for Coney Island at the turn of the century, which Lloyd Webber said was like Las Vegas "and then triple it."

Producers say the original "Phantom" — a fixture of the London and New York stages — has been seen by more than 100 million people around the world. In September, it became the longest-running show in Broadway history, brushing aside Lloyd Webber's "Cats."

Lloyd Webber's other musical hits have included "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," "Jesus Christ Superstar," and "Evita." He owns several theaters in London's famous West End.

According to his Web site, Lloyd Webber has won seven Tony Awards, three Grammy Awards, a Golden Globe and an Oscar. In 2006, he was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor.



FILE - In this file photo May 8, 2008, Britain's composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, receives the Outstanding Achievement in Music Award, at the Classical Brit Awards 2008, held at the Royal Albert Hall in London. A spokeswoman for Andrew Lloyd Webber says Sunday Oct. 25, 2009, the composer has been diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer saying 'the condition is in its very early stages. Andrew is now undergoing treatment and expects to be fully back at work before the end of the year.'

(AP Photo/Nathan Strange)

Lloyd Webber was knighted in 1992 and named to Britain's House of Lords in 1997. □

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The French Steakhouse delivers dining under the stars

Eagle Beach – The French Steakhouse at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa just added another charming dining option, a tropical outdoor courtyard, featuring delicious cuisine under the stars.

The famed French Steakhouse prides itself on the elegant dining experience it offers patrons in the fully air-conditioned dining room. Yet recently the idea of adding a garden spot to the existing blueprint began to sprout in the creative mind of Executive Chef George Hoek, and he immediately recruited

the landscapers to create the intimate, lovely setting.

The French Steakhouse Ooh-La-La menu is now served indoor and alfresco, featuring creative appetizers, soups, salads, seafood dishes, poultry and the Pièce de Résistance South American & USDA Beef specialties.

Among popular appetizers the chef's Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple & mango salsa and the Teriyaki Glazed Seared Duck Breast, served with garden greens and balsamic dressing are real crowd pleasers.



Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano introduces Menu Turistico



Eagle Beach -- Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano located at the heart of the low-rise hotels at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, delivers authentic Mediterranean flavors, at a reasonable price. The restaurant has just introduced Menu Turistico a three-course dinner featuring appetizers, main courses and desserts for just \$19.95, per person, plus 15% service charge.

Patrons may choose between home made soup and Caesar salad, Fettuccini Alfredo, Lasagna Casareccia, Spaghetti alla Bolognese or any favorite pizza with Tiramisu, Cheese Cake or Ice Cream for the sweet finale.

Posing with Angelo the Italian maitre D' at Giorgio's, Mr and Mrs. Klaus, from Pennsylvania, 2nd time repeaters in Aruba at the Manchebo, the trip was a birthday present from him to her and since they are celebrating their 40th anniversary in November, they are already thinking about coming back, they enjoyed Menu Turistico and recommend it wholeheartedly! □



True to the restaurant's French roots, the Onion Soup is a classic, while the Honey Glazed Salmon Salad winks at the exotic East with a sweet soy dressing.

The menu features a great variety of seafood dishes from fresh fish to the totally sinful and amazingly decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of heaven!

The French Steakhouse is naturally famous for the South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, which now shares the stage with juicy USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon. Light-eaters will find the Jerk Chicken Skewers and the Lemon Herb Broilers very satisfying.

Open seven days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dining

room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson who is Aruba's best entertainer, and a walking & breathing music encyclopedia, just whistle the tune, and Eddy will produce a symphonic version of your favorite song. Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-course menu featuring the run of the menu highlights for just \$34.95 per person. www.manchebo.com.steakhouse



Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar reinvents Beach Cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa deserves recognition as the home of Beach Cuisine.

Executive Chef George Hoek and his culinary team serve a Sun Splashed menu on the ocean front terrace,

raising the bar to a must-visit, must-try status.

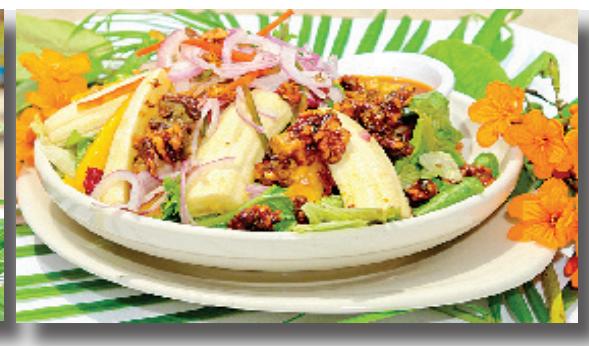
The contemporary menu, lists many favorite dishes from around the world, borrowing inspiration from US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean kitchens, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair.

From Sun-Sational Salads, to Cuban pressed jawbreakers and wraps, mid-day platters also include oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs.

The Pega Pega tropical &

frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, daiquiris, coladas and margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex on the Beach and Mudslides, making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get!

The Pega Pega, one of Aruba's oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with unrivaled views, caring, gracious service, and relaxed atmosphere, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. The bar opens at 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. □



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tributed on five (5) floors. The one, two and three bedroom suites have a perfect view of the ocean and beach. The units include, among other amenities, floor to ceiling glass doors and panoramic windows, spacious terraces, marble bathrooms, European kitchens

with granite counter tops and a full stainless steel appliance package including washer and dryer. This 35-condominium complex will feature a beautiful swimming pool with a beach style entry with waterfalls and fountain and state of the art fiber optic lighting. The entrance of the building has a drive-up covered entrance and an elegant two-story lobby leading to the sun-filled hallways and corridors. The common area will facilitate the owners with a well-equipped gym overlooking the gardens and the pool.

The garden will feel like an oasis true to the projects name. There will also be a recreation room and sofas throughout the common area to lounge and relax.

Further amenities include a 24/7 security, a full concierge and a rental program for the owners who want to earn a return on their investment. The concierge service will be helpful to assist the owners in making their 'homecoming' a very pleasant return. Each condo will have one designated parking space exclusive to the owners.

Construction on Oasis at Eagle

Beach is moving fast. Fifteen of the thirty five units have already been sold. The condominiums will be ready for occupancy by March 2010. Oasis is located on Eagle Beach which allows for an easy access, even on foot, to the best casinos, restaurants, golf courses, shopping areas and night life the Aruba has to offer.

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From ecological Soviet-era ruin, a sea is reborn

By PETER LEONARD,
Associated Press Writer

AKESPE, Kazakhstan — Standing on the shore under the relentless Central Asian sun, Badarkhan Prikeyev drew on a cigarette and squinted into the distance as one fishing boat after another returned with the day's catch.

Until recently, this spot where the fish merchant was standing, in a man-made desert at the edge of nowhere, represented one of the world's worst environmental calamities. Now fresh water was lapping at his boots, proclaiming an environmental miracle — the return of the Aral Sea.

The Aral Sea was once the world's fourth-largest body of fresh water, covering an area the size of Ireland. But then the nations around it became part of the Soviet Union. With their passion for planned economics and giant, nature-reversing projects, the communists diverted the rivers that fed the landlocked sea and used them to irrigate vast

cotton fields. The result: The Aral shrank by 90 percent to a string of isolated stretches of water. The catastrophe "is unprecedented in modern times," says Philip Micklin, a geography professor at Western Michigan University who has studied the Aral Sea for years.

And even now, nearly two decades after the Soviet Union broke up, the damage is far from reversed. Satellite images taken earlier this year show that one section of the sea has shrunk by 80 percent in the last three years alone. Uzbekistan, which controls three-quarters of the Aral Sea, has given up trying. The rescue has happened on Kazakhstan's portion, and it is striking.

Aralsk is a port that ended up 100 kilometers (60 miles) inland. But now, a dam built by the World Bank and Kazakh government is slowly resurrecting a small part of the sea, reviving the fishing industry and bringing hope to an area that some expected

would simply dry up and blow away in the fierce, salty winds.

The returning water has crept to within 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) of Aralsk, also known as Aral, and the World Bank reckons it could reach the port in about six years.

Kazakhs can hardly wait. "Good News — The Sea is Coming Back," declares a sign at the entrance to Aralsk.

In some areas, the water is already lapping at the derelict hulls of ships that were stranded deep inland, heightening the ghostly and surreal aura of the landscape. "Finally, there is hope and a life to be made here," said Prikeyev, 49, waiting for his fishermen near the village of Akespe, 90 kilometers (55 miles) west of Aralsk. "Work is available for anyone who wants it."

This summer his boats returned laden with heaving sacks of pike and carp.

The miracle is a small one compared with the damage



This May 31, 2009 photo shows horses walking in the shallows of the Aral Sea some 100 kilometers from Aralsk, Kazakhstan. The Aral, the world's fourth-largest freshwater sea, once covered an area the size of Ireland. But then it became part of the Soviet Union. With their passion for planned economics and giant, nature-reversing projects, the communists diverted the rivers that fed the landlocked sea and used them to irrigate vast cotton fields. The result: The Aral shrank by 90 percent to a string of isolated stretches of water.

(AP Photo/Sergey Ponomarev)

that will probably never be undone. Uzbekistan has chosen to keep the lucrative cotton industry going, and to prospect for gas and oil under the exposed seabed. But where the sea is being saved, the solution has proved

elegantly simple. The \$88 million project launched in 2001 resulted in a dam to channel the precious waters of the Syr Darya river into the Kazakh section, rather than let them flow south and go to waste. □



On Top Of The News

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Monday, October 26, 2009



US President Barack Obama speaks before signing the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act on October 22, 2009 in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. Obama asked Spain to send a message to Cuba urging its president Raul Castro to step up efforts to improve relations with Washington, a Madrid newspaper reported Sunday.

(AFP/File/Mandel Ngan)

AP sources: Senate likely to cut employer mandate

By DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A proposal for government-backed health insurance is close to gaining the 60 votes needed to pass the Senate and probably will be in overhaul legislation, a Senate Democratic leader said Sunday.

A proposal for the public option that is gaining wide support would allow states to choose not to participate in a government-run insurance program, said New York Sen. Chuck Schumer, the third-ranking Democrat. The "opt out" proposal is drawing support from many liberal and moderate senators and less opposition from lawmakers wary of government insurance, he said. Although Democrats control the 60 votes needed to advance legislation under Senate rules, not all Democrats support creating a government-run health insurance program. Negotiations in recent days have focused on crafting a public option that would satisfy liberal and moderate Democrats and not drive away others. Sen. Ben Nelson, a Nebraska Democrat who objects to a national government-run insurance program, said he would be interested in a proposal that allows states to participate only if they ask to join; he called this approach an "opt in" program. Nelson's vote would be critical in reaching the 60-vote threshold. "I

think if you go with a state-based public option, you can get bipartisan support," Nelson said. "I think we're all more comfortable, the people will be more comfortable if the states are engaged in taking care of the situation, recognizing that Utah's problems and California's problems are different than Nebraska's problems." Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said the public option is needed now to provide competition in regions where one or two insurance companies dominate the market. "I'm fine with the state opt out," Brown said. "If Nebraska or Utah doesn't want to do the public option, their governor and legislature can pass a law saying, 'We're not going to give our citizens that right to have a public option.'" Schumer said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., is leaning strongly toward an opt-out public option. Reid, who would make the final decision about bringing legislation to the Senate for a vote, led a delegation of Democrats to the White House on Thursday to discuss the issue with President Barack Obama. Obama has said he strongly supports a public option as a way of driving down costs by providing competition to private insurers. But the president has said it is not essential to achieving the broad goals of health care legislation.

Continued on Page B4

Police vet more than 1,000 tips in girl's death



Taylor McKinnon leaves a teddy bear at a memorial for Somer Thompson, who was murdered earlier in the week, Friday, Oct. 23, 2009, in Orange Park, Fla.

(AP Photo/Phil Coale)

By TAMARA LUSH,
Associated Press Writer

ORANGE PARK, Fla. — Children played in a bounce house Sunday at a fundraiser for the family of a slain 7-year-old girl, while the adults watching carefully nearby vowed to find the girl's killer and raise money so her mother doesn't have to go back to work immediately.

Continued on Page B3



Iraqi security forces inspect the site of a massive bomb attack at the headquarters of the Baghdad provincial administration in Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009. Iraq police say that a pair of powerful explosions rocked downtown Baghdad. The blasts went off in front of the headquarters of the Baghdad provincial administration and near the Ministry of Justice building during the morning rush hour as people headed to work.

(AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Bombings target government in Baghdad, 147 killed

By REBECCA SANTANA,
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD — A pair of suicide car bombings Sunday devastated the heart of Iraq's capital, killing at least 147 people in the country's deadliest attack in more than two years. The bombs targeted two government buildings and called into question Iraq's ability to protect its people as U.S. forces withdraw.

Continued on Page B6

UN inspectors visit once-secret Iranian site



Inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) leave the Imam Khomeini airport outside Tehran, Iran, Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009.

(AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI,
Associated Press Writer

TEHRAN, Iran — U.N. inspectors entered a once-secret uranium enrichment facility with bunker-like construction and heavy military protection that raised Western suspicions about the extent and intent of Iran's nuclear program.

The visit Sunday by the four-member International Atomic Energy Agency team, reported by state media, was the first independent look inside the planned nuclear fuel lab, a former ammunition dump

burrowed into the treeless hills south of Tehran and only publicly disclosed last month. The inspectors are expected to study plant blueprints, interview workers and take soil samples before wrapping up the three-day mission.

No results from the inspection are expected until the team leaves the country, but some Iranian officials hailed the visit as an example that their nuclear program was open to international scrutiny.

"IAEA inspectors' visit to Fordo shows that Iran's nuclear activities are transparent and

peaceful," the official IRNA news agency quoted lawmaker Hasan Ebrahimi as saying. Another test of Iran's cooperation is fast approaching, however. Iran has promised to respond this week to a U.N.-brokered deal to process its nuclear fuel abroad — a plan designed to ease Western fears about Iran's potential ability to produce weapons-grade material. The current inspection of Iran's second enrichment site came about a month after Tehran disclosed its existence in a letter to the IAEA, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog. The notification to the U.N. agency came just days before President Barack Obama and other Western leaders claimed Iran has been hiding the facility from the world for years.

After Iran's disclosure, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that "the burden of proof is on Iran" to convince the international community its nuclear program is peaceful. Iran says that by reporting the existence of the site voluntarily, it "pre-empted a conspiracy" by the United States and its allies who were hoping to present the site as evidence that Iran was developing its nuclear program in secret. But the new facility, about 20 miles (30 kilometers) north of the holy city of Qom, immediately raised suspicions about the aim of the nuclear

program — which Iran claims is only for peaceful research and energy production. The site is reached by tunnels and is protected by military installations including missile silos and anti-aircraft batteries, Iranian officials said last month. Iran says the facility — known as Fordo after a village believed to have the largest percentage of fighters killed in the 1980-88 war with Iraq — was fortified to protect against any possible attack by the United States or Israel. Officials say the plant won't be operational for another 18 months and would produce uranium enrichment levels up to 5 percent, suitable only for peaceful purposes. Weapons-grade material is more than 90 percent enriched.

Iran says its other known enrichment facility — a much larger industrial-scale plant in Natanz in central Iran — is also only to produce nuclear fuel and not at levels for weapons. But many experts say the enrichment centrifuges could be expanded and upgraded to make weapons-grade material.

Another worry for the West is Iran's plans to install a more advanced type of centrifuge at the Fordo site, capable of enriching uranium several times faster and with higher efficiency.

Iran also has promised to respond later this week on U.N.-drafted proposal to have its nuclear fuel processed in

Russia, which would limit Iran's stockpiles and allow more international controls. Although Iran has not given its official answer on the proposed nuclear deal — discussed last week after talks in Vienna with the United States, France and Russia — there are increasing doubts that Iran's leadership will come on board.

On Saturday, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani claimed the West was trying to "cheat" Iran under the deal that would ship most of Iran's uranium to Russia for reactor-ready enrichment.

Larijani, the country's former nuclear negotiator, said Iran prefers to buy the nuclear fuel it needs for a reactor under construction that makes medical isotopes.

He did not specifically address the fuel needs for Iran's planned full-scale reactor, but Russia is required to provide fuel as part of an agreement to build it for Iran in the southern city of Bushehr. The reactor is nearly operational.

Rejection of the U.N. deal would force the United States and its allies to either return to talks or step up demands for greater economic sanctions and seek to further isolate Iran. The four-member delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency is led by Herman Nackaerts, director of IAEA's division of operations department of safeguards. The inspectors are expected to stay three days in Iran. □

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Continued from Page B1

Somer Thompson's name and photo were everywhere at the carnival-like fundraiser, which was held in a tree-lined park in the town's center. A silent raffle, a bake sale and even glittery makeovers for little girls were offered to help the family of Somer, who went missing after school Monday. Her body was found in a Georgia landfill Wednesday.

"I've been crying since day one," said Amanda Wendorff, a co-organizer of the fundraiser. "When it's a child, it just touches a community."

Wendorff, the wife of a Clay County Sheriff's deputy, has four children of her own. She urged people at the carnival to be on the lookout for anyone suspicious — underscoring the fear that is running deep in the community.

Meanwhile, detectives from

local, state and federal law enforcement agencies are combing through tips: more than 1,150 calls from people around the U.S. have poured in regarding the little girl. So far, no one has come forward to say they saw the girl abducted or attacked. Investigators have ruled out all 161 registered sex offenders who lived within a 5-mile radius of Somer's home. Thompson's mother, Diana

Video shows Calif. police beating of student

SAN JOSE, Calif. — A cell phone video that shows police officers repeatedly hitting an unarmed university student with batons and a Taser gun has prompted a criminal investigation into the officers' conduct, a San Jose police spokesman said.

The video, posted by the San Jose Mercury News on its Web site late Saturday, shows one officer hitting 20-year-old Vietnamese student Phuong Ho with a metal baton more than 10 times, including once on the head. Another officer is seen using his Taser gun on the San Jose State math major.

The final baton strike in last month's incident appears to take place after handcuffs have been attached to Ho's wrists.

"It takes me back to the day I saw the Rodney King video on TV," said Roger Clark, a police expert and a retired lieutenant with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

The last baton strike ought to bring a felony charge, Clark said.

Officers arrested Ho on suspicion of assaulting one of his roommates. He was not armed when police arrived and he told the newspaper he didn't resist arrest.

The confrontation began Sept. 3 when Ho's roommate, Jeremy Sustin, put soap on Ho's steak. The two scuffled, and Ho picked up a steak knife, saying that in his home country he would have killed Sustin for doing what he did. Police were called, and four officers responded.

Officer Kenneth Siegel encountered Ho in the hallway, but couldn't understand the student's accent, police reports said. Ho then ignored a

police command to stand still, reports said.

When Ho tried to follow Siegel into his room, officer Steven Payne Jr. moved to handcuff Ho. Payne wrote in his report that he pushed the student into a wall and then forced him to the floor when he resisted being handcuffed.

Ho, who weighs more than 200 lbs., said his glasses fell off. As he went to pick them up, the officers struck him, he said.

Another one of Ho's roommates, Dimitri Masouris, captured the events on his cell phone. An officer can be heard on the video shouting, "Turn over!" Ho can be heard moaning and crying as he's struck.

"In philosophy, they call it 'dehumanization,'" Ho told the Mercury News. "So when they think me a dangerous guy, they don't treat me like I was human. They hit me like an animal or something."

Masouris said he considered the police response excessive. He sold the tape to San Jose lawyer Duyen Hoang Nguyen, who is representing Ho. The Mercury News obtained a copy of the video and showed it to Daniel Katz, San Jose's assistant police chief. The police department is taking the matter very seriously, he said.

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed said the incident would be investigated by the internal affairs division of the San Jose Police Department and the results forwarded to the Santa Clara County district attorney for possible criminal prosecution.

"Both investigations must respect the constitutionally guaranteed right of due process, which belongs to all parties to an investigation," Reed said Sunday in a statement. □



Crime scene investigators continue to look for evidence regarding the Somer Thompson murder investigation in a vacant house near the Thompson's home Friday, Oct. 23, 2009, in Orange Park, Fla.

(AP Photo/Phil Coale)

Thompson, has praised the hard work of investigators.

"These detectives — excuse my language — are busting their (expletive) to find it. Because it's an it," Diena Thompson said Saturday, referring to the killer of her daughter.

When reached by The Associated Press by phone Sunday, Thompson declined an interview.

"I don't want to think about doing any news until after I bury my baby," she said.

A public viewing and funeral are planned for Monday and Tuesday, but graveside services and the burial will be private. Dozens of mourners and supporters have held nightly vigils outside the Thompsons' home. They have gathered around a huge makeshift memorial of Hannah Montana balloons, stuffed animals and candles that have burned so long that the wax has melted

into the grass.

"I'm shocked that this could happen in this type of community," Somer's maternal

great-grandmother, Marie Spires of New Richmond, Ohio, said Saturday. "And that no one would see or hear anything."

An autopsy has been completed and investigators know how Somer died, but authorities won't disclose their findings or any details about the body. Spires said she doesn't know how the little girl died.

Family and friends described Somer as a friendly little girl who rode her scooter around the neighborhood.

"She never met a stranger. She was very friendly," said Robert O'Cain, a neighbor. "She was always looking for other kids to play with."

Tina Justyna said her daughter, 11, would often go to the library with Somer at school — and the pair would look at books about kittens and puppies. Her daughter is devastated that Somer is gone, she said.

"I don't let her watch the news," Justyna said. "She lost one of the few friends she had." □

**AP SOURCES****Continued from Page B1**

Another approach to creating an alternative to private insurance is setting up nonprofit cooperatives, an idea that has been pushed by Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., chairman of the Senate Budget Committee.

Senate Republicans, who number just 40 in the 100-member chamber, oppose the public option in any form.

"It doesn't make any sense at all," said Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "In fact, I think 100 percent of Republicans have indicated they don't think having the government in the insurance business is a good idea."

Schumer appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press," Nelson and Brown were on CNN's "State of the Union," and McConnell

spoke on ABC's "This Week." By DAVID ESPO, AP Special Correspondent David Espo, AP Special Correspondent - 32 mins ago

WASHINGTON – Businesses would not be required to provide health insurance under legislation being readied for Senate debate, but large firms would owe significant penalties if any worker needed government subsidies to buy coverage on their own, according to Democratic officials familiar with talks on the bill.

For firms with more than 50 employees, the fee could be as high as \$750 multiplied by the total size of the work force if only a few workers needed federal aid, these officials said. That is a more stringent penalty than in a bill that recently cleared the Senate

Finance Committee, which said companies should face penalties on a per-employee basis.

These officials also said individuals would generally be required to purchase affordable insurance if it were available, and face penalties if they defied the requirement. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity, saying they were not authorized to discuss the private negotiations involving key Senate Democrats and the White House. They also stressed that no final decisions have been made on the details of the measure, expected to reach the Senate floor in about two weeks.

In general, the bill taking shape in private talks led by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada is designed to answer President Barack Obama's call to remake the nation's health care system. It would expand coverage to millions who lack it, ban insurance industry practices such as denial of coverage for pre-existing medical conditions and slow the growth in medical spending nationally.

Like a companion measure in the House, it would create a new federally regulated marketplace, termed an

exchange, where individuals and families could purchase insurance sold by private industry. Federal subsidies would be available to help those at lower incomes afford the cost.

Subsidies would also be available to smaller businesses as an incentive for them to provide insurance.

Nominally, Reid's task is to meld bills already approved by the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In reality, however, he has a virtual free hand in coming up with a measure, with a goal of amassing a 60-vote majority to overcome a threatened Republican filibuster.

Reid has told fellow senators he is strongly considering including a provision for a government-run insurance plan in the bill as a way to assure consumers have a choice and to create competition for private companies. States would be permitted to drop out under the plan.

That is a somewhat weaker version than the HELP Committee voted for, but the Finance Committee omitted any federal role in the sale of coverage in favor of nonprofit

co-ops competing with private industry.

The issue is the most contentious in the effort to overhaul the nation's health care system, and it is not known whether Reid has the 60 votes for his plan.

Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., a leading advocate for a government-run insurance provision, said on NBC's Meet The Press he thought the drive for 60 votes was close to success.

One critic, Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., said on CNN he was not enthusiastic with the proposal, but did not rule out giving Reid his vote on a key procedural vote.

"Well, I certainly am not excited about a public option where states would opt out. ... I'll take a look at the one where states could opt in if they make the decision themselves," he said.

Numerous other issues are involved in the bill.

The requirement for individuals to purchase insurance would include provisions to exempt individuals or families unable to find affordable coverage. Those who are obligated to buy coverage and refuse would face a fine of perhaps \$100 in the first year of the program.

There is no penalty for individuals in the first year of the program in the Senate Finance Committee bill, a provision inserted at the request of Sen. Olympia Snowe.

The Maine Republican is the only member of her party in either house of Congress to vote for a Democratic-backed health care bill in committee this year.

The switch Reid is considering is an attempt to increase the number of people with insurance, a key goal of the legislation.

Officials familiar with the Senate negotiations said the bill is likely to maintain a federal health care program for lower-income children as a stand-alone program, rather than folding it into the broad national insurance exchange. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., is an ardent proponent of the arrangement and did not announce publicly he would vote for the Senate Finance Committee bill until after his proposal was approved. □

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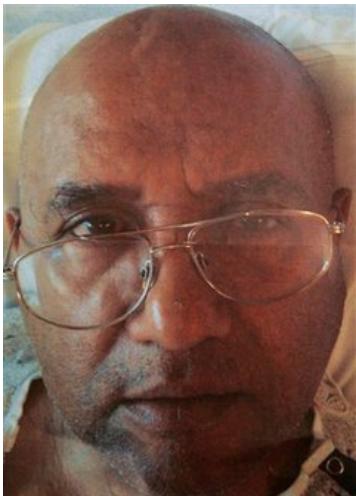
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This undated photo provided by the Morris County Prosecutors Office shows Jose Feliciano of Easton, Pa. Feliciano was charged with murder Saturday, Oct. 24, 2009 in the slaying of a Roman Catholic priest whose body was found in the rectory of his church in northern New Jersey.

(AP Photo/Courtesy of Morris County Prosecutors Office)

NJ town grieves for slain priest, accused janitor

By VICTOR EPSTEIN,
Associated Press Writer

CHATHAM, N.J. — An arrest in the brutal slaying of a Roman Catholic priest has brought little solace to this bucolic, upscale community, which widely views the suspected role of the longtime church janitor as a second tragedy.

More than 150 people at St. Patrick's Church for Sunday's early Mass prayed for the Rev. Ed Hinds, whose body was discovered in the church rectory Friday, and for Jose Feliciano, who is charged with stabbing the priest 32 times with a kitchen knife.

"This is a tragedy for this community," the Rev. Owen Moran said after leading Mass. "It's a tragedy for Father Ed and his family, and it's a tragedy for the Feliciano family."

Authorities say the slaying occurred at about 5 p.m. Thursday after an argument between Hinds and Feliciano in the rectory.

Morris County Prosecutor Robert Bianchi told CNN that the two men argued "over Feliciano's continued employment." He said Hinds dialed 911 from his cell phone and said he was being attacked and needed help. □

Lawyer blasts release of affidavit in balloon case

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — A mother's confession that she and her husband faked their 6-year-old son's disappearance in a runaway balloon shouldn't have been made public, an attorney for the father said.

Denver attorney David Lane blasted Larimer County officials for releasing documents Friday in the investigation into whether Mayumi and Richard Heene staged a hoax, saying the papers should have remained sealed until arrests were made.

"It's further proof of what that sheriff will do to further his own agenda and try to make it unfair to the Heenes," Lane told The Coloradoan in Fort Collins.

He said the Heenes haven't even seen the affidavit, which was used to get a warrant to search their home.

Sheriff Jim Alderden and Larimer County District Attorney Larry Abrahamson said releasing such documents is common if there's not an order to seal a document.

Mayumi Heene admitted to deputies that she and her husband knew their son, Falcon, was hiding in their Fort Collins home while authorities were chasing the homemade, UFO-shaped helium balloon, according to the affidavit. She is represented by lawyer Lee Christian, who was traveling and didn't immediately respond to messages left with his office.

The Heenes' reports that the boy was inside a compartment on the bottom of the balloon set off a 50-mile scramble Oct. 15 in northern Colorado by police, firefighters and National Guard and media helicopters. The boy was later found at the home, where he said he'd been hiding in the garage because he was afraid he was in trouble.

Alderden said he will pursue charges against both parents, accusing them of staging a hoax for publicity as they tried to land a deal for a reality TV show.

It's not clear if Mayumi Heene's alleged confession could be used in a case against her husband, said Denver defense attorney



FILE - In this Oct. 15, 2009 file photo, six-year-old Falcon Heene is shown with his father, Richard, outside the family's home in Fort Collins, Colo., after Falcon Heene was found hiding in a box in a space above the garage. Falcon Heene at first had been reported to be aboard a flying-saucer-shaped balloon fashioned by his father and then carried by high winds on to the plains of eastern Colorado.

(AP Photo/David Zalubowski, file)

Karen Steinhauser, a former prosecutor and current adjunct professor at the University of Denver's Sturm College of Law. Communication between spouses is considered privileged, and testimony about what was said can be blocked, Steinhauser said.

"The whole idea is to protect relationships," she said. Complicating the case, however, is whether the children were involved in the discussions.

"I'm not aware of anything granting family privilege," Steinhauser said. □



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Iraqis gather at the site of a massive bomb attack at the Ministry of Justice in Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009. Iraq police say that a pair of powerful explosions rocked downtown Baghdad. The blasts went off in front of the headquarters of the Baghdad provincial administration and near the Ministry of Justice building during the morning rush hour as people headed to work.

(AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

SUICIDE BOMB

Continued from Page B1

The bombings show that insurgents still have the ability

to launch horrific attacks even as violence has dropped dramatically in Iraq. Many fear such attacks will only

increase as Iraq prepares for crucial January elections.

The dead included 35 employees at the Ministry of Justice and at least 25 staff members of the Baghdad Provincial Council, said police and medical officials speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. At least 721 people were wounded, including three American contractors.

The street where the blasts occurred had just been reopened to vehicle traffic six months ago. Shortly after, blast walls were repositioned to allow traffic closer to the government buildings. Such changes were touted by Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as a sign that safety was returning to the city.

The Iraqi leader walked among the mangled and blackened cars, which lay in front of blast walls that had been decorated with peaceful street scenes of Iraq. At the Justice Ministry, windows and walls on both sides of the street were blown away, and blood pooled with water from burst pipes.

Al-Maliki has staked his political reputation and re-election bid on his ability to bring peace to the country and pledged to punish those responsible, who he said wanted to "spread chaos in the country, undermine the political process and prevent the holding of parliamentary elections." But the Sunday attacks seemed designed to paint the Iraqi leader as incapable of providing security to the beleaguered city, undermining much of his political support.

The attacks occurred just hours before Iraq's top leadership was scheduled to meet with heads of political parties in order to reach a compromise on election guidelines needed to hold the January vote.

President Barack Obama, who earlier this week reaffirmed the U.S.'s commitment to withdrawing its troops from the country, called al-Maliki to offer his condolences.

"These bombings serve no purpose other than the murder of innocent men, women and

children, and they only reveal the hateful and destructive agenda of those who would deny the Iraqi people the future that they deserve," Obama said.

The fact that the vehicles were able to get into an area home to numerous government institutions — just hundreds of yards from the heavily fortified Green Zone where the U.S. Embassy and the prime minister's office are located — sparked demands that those in charge of the city's security be held accountable.

"Those responsible for security and intelligence should be checked and interrogated," said Sunni Iraqi lawmaker Wathab Shakir. "Why should innocent people be killed?"

The initial investigation suggested the vehicles, each loaded down with more than 1,500 pounds of explosives, might have passed through some security checkpoints before hitting their destination, said Maj. Gen. Qassim al-Mousawi, a spokesman for the city's operations command center.

There have been no claims of responsibility so far, but massive car bombs have been the hallmark of the Sunni insurgents seeking to overthrow the country's Shiite-dominated government.

Iraq has accused members of the outlawed Baath Party living in neighboring Syria of being behind another series of deadly bombings in August that also targeted government buildings. Al-Maliki blamed the attacks on Baathist and Al-Qaida.

Black smoke billowed from the frantic scene, as emergency service vehicles sped to the area. Many of the wounded were loaded into the back of trucks and into civilian cars because there were too many for ambulances to carry.

"The walls collapsed and we had to run out," said Yasmeen Afdhal, 24, an employee of the Baghdad provincial administration, which runs the city. "There are many wounded, and I saw them being taken away. They were pulling victims out of the rubble, and rushing them to

ambulances."

The provincial council is the city government, which oversees a broad range of city services such as garbage collection, electricity, distribution of fuel for generators and school maintenance.

U.S. troops were also called in at the request of the Iraqi government to help secure the area, deal with any explosive material and offer forensics personnel to assist in the investigation, said a military spokesman, Maj. Dave Shoupe.

The coordinated bombings were the deadliest since a series of massive truck bombs in northern Iraq killed nearly 500 villagers from the minority Yazidi sect in August 2007. In Baghdad itself, it was the worst attack since a series of suicide bombings against Shiite neighborhoods in April 2007 killed 183.

Three American security contractors working for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad were injured in the blasts, said Philip Frayne, an embassy spokesman. Frayne could not immediately provide details about who the contractors were escorting, which company they worked for or the nature of their injuries.

The explosions were just a few hundred yards from Iraq's Foreign Ministry, which is still rebuilding after massive bombings there in August. The bombings were a devastating blow for a country that has seen a dramatic drop in violence since the height of the sectarian fighting in 2006 and 2007.

On the streets of Baghdad, many Iraqis were angry at what they described as a lapse in security and wary about what will happen when U.S. forces leave.

"Everyday, we hear statements from different government officials that our forces are ready to control the situation on the ground when the U.S. forces withdraw," Zahid Hussain Najim said. "But day after day it has been found that these officials are either liars or have no idea about what's going on outside their offices." □

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Violent clashes erupt at Jerusalem's holiest site

By MATTI FRIEDMAN,
Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Israeli police firing stun grenades faced off Sunday against masked Palestinian protesters hurling stones and plastic chairs outside the Holy Land's most volatile shrine, where past violence has escalated into prolonged conflict.

A wall of Israeli riot police behind plexiglass shields marched toward young men covering their faces with T-shirts and scarves, sending many of them running for cover into the Al-Aqsa mosque, one of the Islamic structures in the compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary.

They remained holed up in the mosque with police outside for several hours until dispersing before nightfall. Eighteen protesters were arrested, and no serious injuries were reported. But even mild troubles at the disputed compound in Jerusalem's Old City can quickly ignite widespread unrest, and police remained on high alert.

"Jerusalem is a red line that Israel should not cross," said Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rdeneh, condemning the Israeli police action.

A visit to the site in 2000 by Ariel Sharon, then an Israeli opposition leader and later prime minister, helped ignite deadly clashes that escalated into violence that engulfed Israel and the Palestinian territories for several years.

Sunday's disturbances were rooted in calls from Muslim leaders for their followers to protect the Islamic sites from what they said were Israeli plots to damage them or let Jews pray in the

compound. There was no evidence to support either claim.

Palestinians are also angry about stalled peace talks and ongoing Israeli construction in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, areas they want for a future state.

Stoking tensions, a group of hardline settlers and rabbis met in Jerusalem on Sunday evening calling on Jews to pray at the site. Most rabbis, however, say the place is so holy that Jews should not even set foot there. Police allow only Muslims to worship in the compound and say that practice will be enforced. Israel has controlled the site since 1967, but has left day-to-day administration in the hands of a Muslim clerical body, the Waqf. Israelis and tourists are allowed to visit at certain times.

Israel's national police chief, David Cohen, accused a small group of Muslim extremists of trying to foment violence.

"The police will act with a strong hand against anyone who disrupts order on the Temple Mount and against those incite to riot," Cohen said.

The Jerusalem holy site is a hot-button issue for Muslims worldwide, and the Palestinian condemnation was quickly taken up abroad. The head of the 57-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference warned that any provocative act by Israel "would bear grave consequences," while the Arab League called on the U.N. to "stop the Israeli aggressions." Egypt urged Israel to refrain from actions with "negative repercussions" for the region.

The Islamic militant Hamas movement, which rules the Gaza Strip, called on Palestinians to rise up

against Israel and urged Arab countries that have ties to Israel to sever them.

Nine police officers were lightly wounded and 18 protesters were detained, police said. The Palestinian president's adviser on Jerusalem affairs and a leader from Israel's Islamic Movement were arrested for alleged incitement, police said.

A total of 25 protesters were injured by batons or gas inhalation, said Ameen Abu Ghazaleh, head of the Palestinian Red Crescent's ambulance service. An Australian journalist covering the clash was struck in the face by a rock and lightly wounded, Israeli police said. The disputing claims to the man-made platform in Jerusalem's Old City lie at the heart of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. It is revered as the holiest site in Judaism, home to two biblical Temples, and Jews pray at the foot of the



Masked Palestinian youths throw stones at Israeli policemen, not seen, during clashes in the Arab neighborhood of Ras Al Amud in east Jerusalem, Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009. Israeli forces stormed the Jerusalem's holiest shrine, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, Sunday, firing stun grenades to disperse hundreds of Palestinian protesters who were pelting them with stones.

(AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

compound at the Western Wall.

In the Islamic tradition, it is the place where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven in a nighttime journey recounted in the Quran, and is considered the third-holiest site after the Saudi cities of Mecca and Medina.

Israel has carried out numerous archaeological

digs in nearby areas, but has denied Palestinian allegations that the work could endanger the compound.

The Palestinians seek to make east Jerusalem — including the holy compound — the capital of a future independent state. Israel's government says it will not share control of the holy city. □

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Afghan president, challenger endorse runoff

By ROBERT H. REID,
Associated Press Writer

KABUL — President Hamid Karzai and his challenger ruled out a power-sharing deal before Afghanistan's Nov. 7 runoff, saying the second round of balloting must be held as planned to bolster democracy in this war-ravaged country.

Some Obama administration officials had said the U.S. would be receptive to a deal to avoid another disruptive election if Karzai and former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah agreed.

However, both Afghan candidates said on talk shows televised Sunday in the United States that they were committed to a second-round vote, despite the huge security and logistical challenges and the threat of Taliban attacks against voters.

"It has to be held. I made sure to have agreement from all the international players before agreeing to runoff to have a second round absolutely surely agreed upon and promised," Karzai said on CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS" program. "Therefore, we must have a second round. If we don't do that, we'll be insulting democracy and a pledge to respecting the vote of the people."

Speaking on "Fox News

Sunday," Abdullah was asked if he were interested in a deal to avoid a runoff.

"No, I think I should rule it out because I'm ready to go for a runoff," he replied.

President Barack Obama's administration is hoping the runoff will produce a legitimate government after massive ballot-rigging sullied the first-round vote. Another flawed election would cast doubt on the wisdom of sending tens of thousands more U.S. troops to support a weak government tainted by fraud.

Last Tuesday, Karzai bowed to intense international pressure and agreed to a runoff after a U.N.-backed panel voided enough of his votes in the Aug. 20 election that he fell below the 50 percent threshold for a first-round victory in the 36-candidate race.

Abdullah said his focus was on making sure that the November election is carried out without the fraud that marred the first round of balloting.

Abdullah's campaign aides have called for the top three officials on Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission to step down because of their alleged role in electoral fraud. However, Abdullah's campaign has stopped short of threatening a boycott if the electoral officials refuse to step down.

Karzai acknowledged fraud had taken place but insisted that the August balloting "as a whole was clean, and as a result was clear.

"I decided for peace, for stability, and for the future of democracy in Afghanistan and for the future of institutional order in Afghanistan to call for a runoff, and I find that in the interest of the Afghan people," he said.

Karzai said that if Abdullah is interested in joining the government after the election "he is most welcome."

"I'm known for consensus building and for inclusivity," Karzai said. "And that's a good trademark."

Abdullah, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," program, said he left the Karzai government three years ago because he did not want to be part of "the same deteriorating situation."

The political battle is raging as the Taliban is gaining strength, exploiting public disenchantment with poor governance and widespread discontent in much of the country over the presence of foreign military forces. Western officials are eager to see a new government in place so they can begin trying to heal the deep rifts within anti-Taliban groups in the country. In the capital of Kabul,



University students shout anti-U.S. slogans in front of President Barack Obama's effigy during a demonstration in front of the Afghan Parliament in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009. Hundreds of Afghans shouted anti-US, NATO and Afghan government slogans and burned effigy of the President Barack Obama during a rally to protest a rumor that U.S. forces had bombed a mosque and burned a copy of the Muslim holy book, the Quran, in nearby Wardak province in mid-October.

(AP Photo/Musadeq Sadeq)

riot police fired shots in the air Sunday to disperse a demonstration by nearly 1,000 students protesting the rumored desecration of a Muslim holy book, the Quran, by U.S. troops during an operation two weeks ago in Wardak province.

U.S. and Afghan authorities have denied any such desecration and insist that the Taliban are spreading the rumor to stir up public anger. The rumor has sparked similar protests in Wardak and Khost provinces.

Students burned an effigy

of Obama and chanted slogans such as "down with Americans, down with Israel" as they marched from Kabul University to the parliament building, where riot police turned them back. There were no reports of casualties.

One of the demonstrators, who gave his name as Zabiullah, said "the people behind this humiliation should be arrested."

"The actions of the university students are because the Quran is the law of our Islamic religion, and it has been desecrated," he said. □

Venezuela ups border security after 10 slayings

By IAN JAMES,
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's defense minister said Sunday that 10 killings near the border with Colombia may be the work of warring factions in that country's internal conflict, and said Venezuelan troops are stepping up security.

Mostly Colombians, the 10 were executed and their bodies were found in multiple spots in western Tachira state on Saturday, Defense Minister Ramon Carrizalez said. Authorities believe the victims were among a group of 12 recently abducted in the area.

The killings occurred amid tensions between Venezuela and Colombia, with accusations flying over the adequacy of Venezuela's efforts to police its territory and stem the flow of Colombian cocaine.

In Colombia, President Alvaro Uribe condemned the killings and said they "show that

terrorism is international, that it has no borders." He offered help in the investigation and expressed confidence that Venezuelan authorities will act promptly to "take those terrorists to jail."

Relatives told authorities that those who were kidnapped — including 10 Colombians, a Peruvian and a Venezuelan — were seized by a group of armed men dressed in black on Oct. 11 from a field where they were playing football, the Public Ministry said in a statement Sunday. It said the armed men are believed to have called out the names of the members of the football team one-by-one before taking them away in vehicles.

Carrizalez, who is also vice president, said one man survived the ordeal, and another was believed missing. The survivor, 19-year-old Colombian Manuel Cortes, was shot in the face and the bullet passed through his jaw, said Mauricio Lopez, a brother

of the victim. Several of the Colombians were from the town of Bucaramanga, and investigators suspect their killings may have resulted from "confrontation between irregular groups as part of the Colombian conflict," Carrizalez said. He said Venezuelan troops are increasing patrols to sweep the area and have orders to "act forcefully" against any armed Colombian group.

Colombian officials in the past have accused Venezuela of allowing leftist Colombian rebels to take refuge across the border.

Carrizalez said the remote border region is difficult to control and that "we're a victim of this conflict" spilling across from Colombia.

Relations have been tense recently between Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Colombia's U.S.-allied government.

On Friday, Colombia's defense minister, Gabriel Silva, said



Demonstrators run from tear gas shot by the Venezuelan National Guard at the border crossing between Colombia and Venezuela in Cucuta October 22, 2009. They are protesting against the Venezuelan National Guard's operation to stop the smuggling of food and fuel across the border.

REUTERS/Manuel Hernandez

Silva on Sunday, saying "he's mentally retarded at least" and is "following instructions from the (U.S.) empire."

Chavez contends that Colombia and the U.S. have tried to use the drug issue to unfairly discredit his government. □

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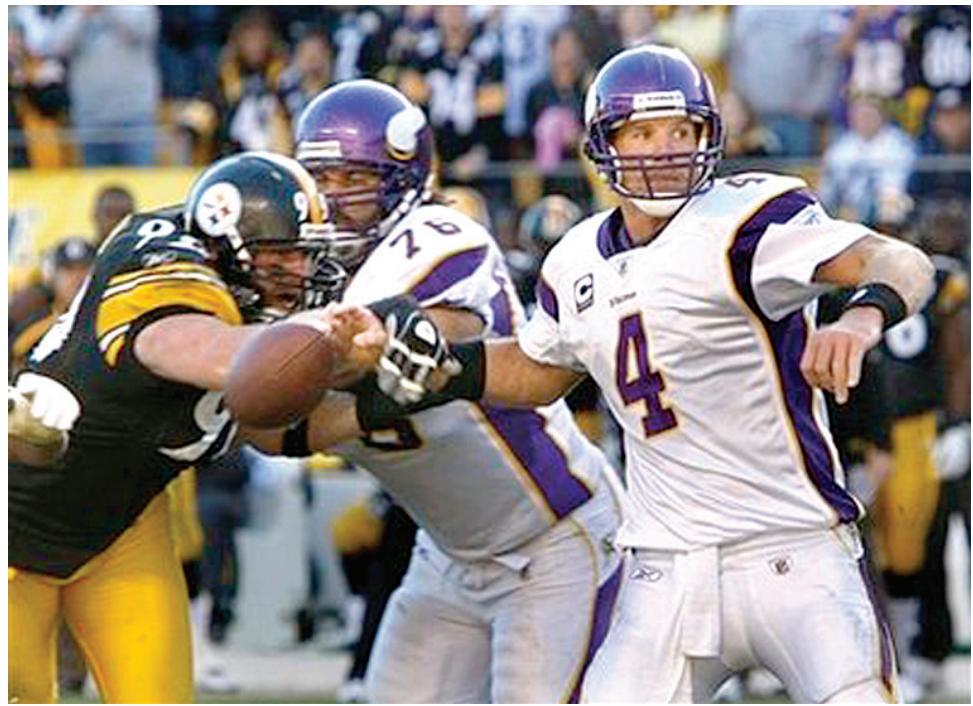
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Steelers' big-play defense end Vikings unbeaten season

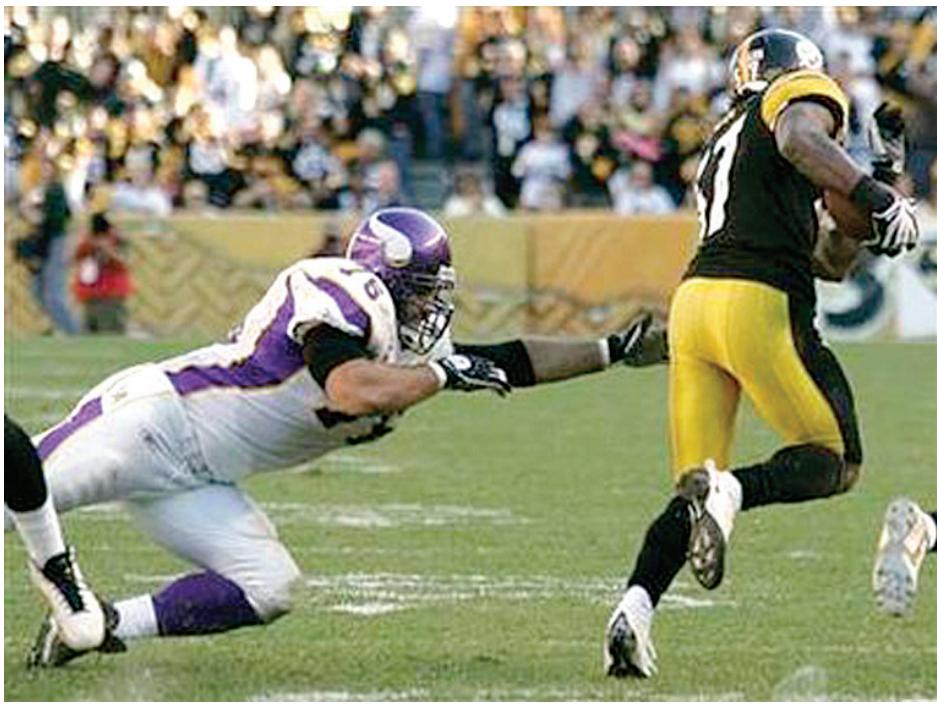


PITTSBURGH(AP) Brett Favre, Adrian Peterson and the Minnesota Vikings were anything but perfect. The Vikings couldn't gain a half-yard when it might have turned the game, then watched the Steelers' big-play defense end their unbeaten season with two long touchdown returns in the final 6 1/2 minutes.

LaMarr Woodley's 77-yard fumble return and Keyaron Fox's 82-yard interception return on turnovers by Favre allowed the Steelers to turn back Minnesota's repeated comeback attempts, and the Steelers rode three major defensive stands to an important 27-17 victory Sunday.

The anticipated quarterback showdown between Favre and NFL passing leader Ben Roethlisberger became a defensive duel. And the Super Bowl champion Steelers (5-2) - No. 1 defensively the last two seasons - are tough to beat in any game that's decided by defense.

The Vikings (6-1) conceded as much in the third quarter when, after failing to score from a half-yard out on three plays in which Peterson got the ball only once, they settled for a field goal that kept Pittsburgh in the lead at 13-10. Woodley's return, with the linebacker huffing and puffing for the final 30 yards after Brett Keisel stripped Favre of the ball, was reminiscent of James



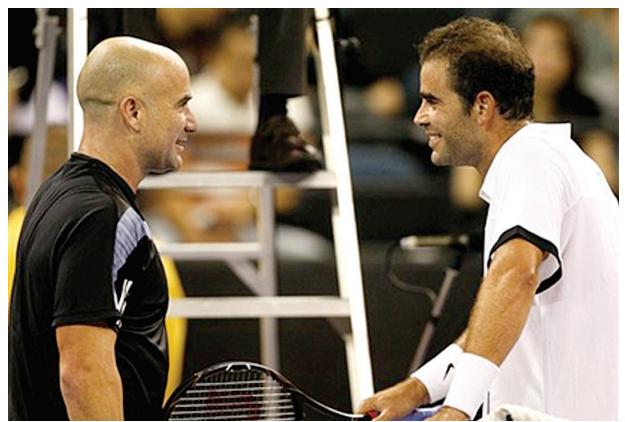
Harrison's 100-yard interception return for a touchdown in the Super Bowl against Arizona. The touchdown put the Steelers up 20-10 with 6:23 remaining, after the Vikings drove to the Steelers 8 and were in position to take their first lead since Peterson's 2-yard touchdown run put them up 7-3 in the second quarter.

With Favre hitting Peterson on a 29-yard pass play, the Vikings drove to the Steelers 18 with just over a minute remaining, and their biggest victory of an improbably good season awaited. But Fox stepped in front of Favre's pass intended for Chester Taylor and returned it almost the length of the field,

with nearly every Viking except Favre in pursuit. Favre had been intercepted only twice previously.

On the next two downs, Favre couldn't get the ball to covered receivers in the end zone. Coach Brad Childress then settled for Ryan Longwell's 18-yard field goal rather than go for it on fourth down, as the crowd of 65,597 - a Steelers record at Heinz Field - loudly cheered the potentially decisive stand. Favre (34 of 51, 334 yards) was better statistically than Roethlisberger (14 of 26, 175 yards) - except for the turnovers. The Vikings outgained Pittsburgh 386-259, but couldn't outscore the Steelers defense. □

Sampras beats Agassi in Macau exhibition



MACAU (AP)—Pete Sampras edged by Andre Agassi in three sets on Sunday as the two retired American tennis greats revisited one of the sport's greatest rivalries.

The 3-6, 6-3, 10-8 win in this southern Chinese gambling enclave was the first time the two had played since Sampras won in the 2002 U.S. Open final for his then-record 14th Grand Slam. The fast indoor surface at The Venetian Macao arena favored

Sampras' attacking style, but it was Agassi who came out strong in the first set. He showed no signs of the bad back that required four injections during his final tournament, the 2006 U.S. Open.

"Somehow when you see Pete, it all comes back to you pretty quickly," Agassi said. "I just go, 'Well, I don't really have much of a choice here.' It's just nice to be so familiar with somebody's game." Sampras, who beat Roger Federer at the same venue in an exhibition two years ago, bounced back in the second set, serving an ace and using a delicate pickup volley to draw even.

He continued to have the advantage in the super tiebreaker, overwhelming Agassi with a powerful serve. Trailing 9-6, Agassi saved two match points—the second with a down-the-line backhand winner—but Sampras served out the match with another ace. "Andre just hits the ball so cleanly, even after being retired for three years. The pace of his shots was very heavy," Sampras said, noting Agassi served more aces than he did.



"How many times does that happen?" Agassi joked. The two Americans captivated fans in the 1990s and early 2000s with their contrasting styles and personalities. Sampras led their head-to-head series 20 to 14, including 4 to 1 in Grand Slam finals. "Pete's hands are the same as they've always been," Agassi said. "He has great feel for the ball. He surprised me with the number of pickups he made out there. It was like it just came very naturally." □

Cleveland Indians hire Manny Acta as manager

CLEVELAND (AP)—The Cleveland Indians hired Manny Acta to be their manager, giving him the job about three months after he was fired by the Washington Nationals.

Acta signed a three-year contract with a club option for 2013, Indians spokesman Bart Swain said Sunday. Additional terms were not disclosed.

"I am very excited to become part of the Cleveland Indians family," Acta said. "I look forward to working with this talented group of young men who seem to possess a lot of energy and passion for their work."

The Indians chose Acta after a second interview over former New York Mets manager Bobby Valentine and Indians

Triple-A manager Torey Lovullo. The team had been expected to interview Dodgers hitting coach Don Mattingly this week.

"We are very excited to have Manny Acta on board as our major league manager," Indians general manager Mark Shapiro said in a statement.

"After speaking with an impressive array of candidates, we feel that Manny is a very strong and experienced leader who possesses great energy and enthusiasm along with tremendous communication skills and a positive mindset that will command a presence in the dugout, clubhouse and with our fans."

The 40-year-old Acta, who was drafted by the Astros as a 17-year-old first baseman,



La Russa: 'Closer' to decision with Cardinals

ST. LOUIS (AP)—Tony La Russa flew from his West Coast home to St. Louis on Sunday to continue discussions with the Cardinals about his future as manager.

La Russa told the Associated Press in a telephone interview before boarding a plane that talks were ongoing, and that he was planning to attend a Bruce Springsteen concert Sunday night.

The 65-year-old La Russa has been mulling his future since the NL Central champion Cardinals were swept in the division series by the Los Angeles Dodgers on Oct. 10. His two-year, \$8.5 million contract expires at the end of the month.

"We're getting closer," said La Russa, who has managed the team for 14 years. "But nothing has been decided. I can't tell you anything yet."

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch quoted sources that believed a formal announcement that La Russa would be returning could be made early in the week.

Chairman Bill DeWitt Jr. and general manager John Mozeliak have both said they'd like La Russa to return. He's led the Cardinals to eight postseason appearances and a 2006 World Series title, and he's third on the career victories list, trailing only Connie Mack and John McGraw. □

also interviewed for Houston's opening this offseason. The Indians will introduce him at a news conference Monday.

Cleveland tied for last in the AL Central after coming into this season with high expectations. The Indians fired manager Eric Wedge in the final week of the season. Acta went 158-252 in 2 1/2 years with the Nationals, who

fired him after a 21-61 start this season.

The Indians, though, dismissed Acta's poor record and appreciated the way he developed some of the Nationals' young players.

"I believe we will grow together as a team," Acta said, "with the ultimate goal of bringing a championship to Cleveland and its fans." □

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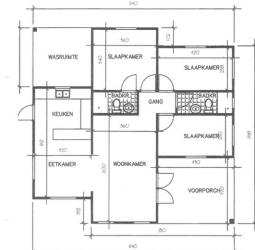
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UConn players prepare for teammate's funeral

STORRS, Conn. — As family and friends of slain Connecticut football player Jasper Howard gathered Sunday for a viewing at a Miami mortuary, his teammates prepared to travel to Florida for his funeral.

Howard, a 20-year-old cornerback, was fatally stabbed during an altercation outside a dance on Connecticut's campus early last Sunday.

UConn played Saturday, losing to No. 22 West Virginia 28-24 in an emotionally charged game.

On Sunday, UConn coach Randy Edsall said he expects a wide range of emotions at Monday's funeral at New Birth Baptist Church in Miami, Howard's hometown. The team will travel together on a charter

flight.
 "It's going to be a difficult day for some of these young people," Edsall said Sunday during a conference call. "This is a lesson for them in life, that these are the things you have to deal with in life and (Monday) as Jazz is buried it brings a little closure to this."

Edsall was quick to add that Howard will remain in the team's thoughts every day. "But it's time now for everybody to continue to move forward and really get back into what we have to do with our own everyday lives, and then ... remember Jazz in their own way."

Police this weekend searched storm drains and a lake on the University of

Connecticut campus near where the stabbing occurred.

The state police dive team spent Saturday at Swan Lake, near the entrance of the UConn campus. Authorities would not say what, if anything, was recovered.

Connecticut State Police spokesman Lt. J. Paul Vance referred questions to the UConn police, who declined to comment.

No one has been charged in Howard's death.

Police have made just one arrest in connection with the fight. Johnny Hood, 21, of Hartford, faces charges of breach of peace and interfering with police. He is not charged with the stabbing. □

Florida No. 1 again in AP Poll, 'Bama falls to 2nd

NEW YORK (AP) — Florida regained the top spot Sunday in The Associated Press poll from Alabama, which was ranked No. 1 for a week ahead of the Gators.

The Crimson Tide needed a blocked field goal on the last play to beat Tennessee 12-10 on Saturday, while Florida pulled away from Mississippi State in the fourth quarter for a 29-19 victory. The Gators received 30 first-place votes to Alabama's 23.

No. 3 Texas got seven first-place votes after its 41-7 victory at Missouri.

The last time two teams flip-flopped in the top two spots of the AP Top 25 from one week to the next was 1992, when Miami and Washington did it.

Like Texas, No. 4 Southern California, No. 5 Cincinnati, No. 6 Boise State and No. 7 Iowa held their places in the latest media rankings.

TCU jumped two spots to No. 8 after a 38-7 victory at Mountain West Conference rival BYU. LSU stayed at No. 9 and Oregon moved up two spots to No. 10.

The Ducks host USC on Saturday in a game with huge Pac-10 championship implications.

Florida began the season as an overwhelming No. 1 in the AP poll. Alabama started five and steadily gained on the Gators before finally jumping past them last week, when Florida needed

a field goal in the waning seconds to beat Arkansas at home. Alabama's All-American nose guard Terrence Cody blocked Daniel Lincoln's 44-yard field-goal attempt on the final play Saturday to keep the Crimson Tide undefeated.

Florida led Mississippi State 16-13 in the fourth quarter, then scored two touchdowns 33 seconds apart to put the Bulldogs away.

No. 11 Georgia Tech starts the second 10, followed by Penn State and Oklahoma State. The Cowboys host Texas on Halloween night.

Virginia Tech is 14th and Houston is 15th.

Pittsburgh moved up four spots to No. 16 after a 41-14 Big East victory against South Florida. The Panthers have their highest ranking since they were 15th in October 2003.

Ohio State, Miami, Utah and West Virginia round out the top 20.

The final five includes three teams that were unranked last week. No. 21 South Carolina moved up two spots and No. 22 Oklahoma moved up three.

No. 23 Arizona is in the AP ranking for the first time since Oct. 22, 2000. No. 24 Mississippi and No. 25 Notre Dame re-entered the rankings.

BYU, Kansas and Texas Tech dropped out after losses. □

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Elmar

583-3000

Informacion

118

Kadaster

Uruguayos votan para elegir presidente, diputados y senadores

MONTEVIDEO (AP) - Los uruguayos acudieron a las urnas el domingo en comicios generales y entre los primeros votantes figuró el aspirante presidencial oficialista José Mujica, en tanto el opositor Luis A. Lacalle visitó a una partidaria de 108 años de edad.

Poco más de 2,5 millones de electores están habilitados en estos comicios que se iniciaron a las 08.00 horas (10:00 GMT) con cierre de las urnas a las 19:30 (21:30 GMT). La Corte Electoral, ha informado que los resultados oficiales serán difundidos a partir de las 21:30 (23:30 GMT). Mujica fue uno de los primeros en votar en la capital.

"No tengo cábalas", dijo el candidato, pero tampoco "ansiedad, ni estoy nervioso ni nada. Voy a tomar mate como todos los días", señaló a la prensa a la salida del local de votación.

El presidente socialista Tabaré Vázquez votó temprano y dijo a la

prensa que estas elecciones "las vivo con mucho más tranquilidad que hace 5 años", cuando fue elegido presidente como abanderado del izquierdista Frente Amplio.

El gobernante aseguró que a partir del lunes comenzará a funcionar un equipo de transición encargado de brindar a su sucesor electo la información sobre el estado en que entregará el gobierno el 1 de marzo de 2010.

"Será la más amplia, profunda y transparente de los transiciones que el país ha vivido", enfatizó. Mujica, un ex guerrillero tupamaro, de 74 años edad, que fue preso político, ministro de ganadería y actualmente es senador, es el candidato del Frente Amplio.

Las encuestas previas de distintas consultoras profesionales independientes le asignan una intención de voto que oscila entre el 44 y el 49%.

Su principal contendiente es el ex



José 'Pepe' Mujica, 74, el candidato presidencial del oficialista Frente Amplio, de izquierda, vota en Montevideo en las elecciones generales el domingo 25 de octubre de 2009. Luis Alberto Lacalle (1990-1995), un liberal de 69 años de edad, quien representa al centroderechista Partido Nacional (o Blanco). Los sondeos se asignaron entre un 32 y un 35% de las preferencias. □

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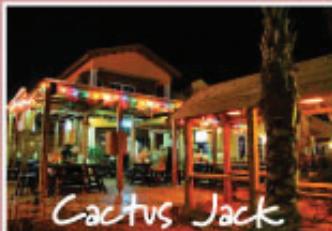


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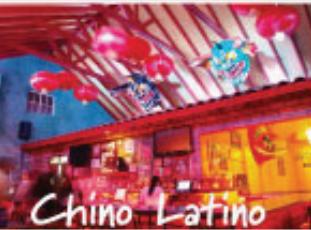
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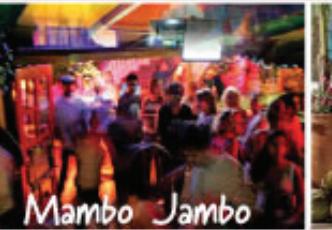
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